

The Pueblo: Whodunit?

In every week the nation was puzzling over the rights and wrongs of Lloyd Bucher's conduct as commander of the captured spy ship, the *Pueblo*, Allen W. Dulles died. The coincidence is to the dramatist's taste, for Mr. Dulles was Mr. Intelligence, and as the Bucher hearings proceed, we glimpse the shadowy outline of how the government operates its intelligence services in peacetime.

After the Second World War, the intelligence profession in this country was in the doldrums. The Communist bloc under the iron hand of Stalin was both monolithic and menacing. The times called for the gathering by our government of information not obtainable by normal, open methods, and the doing of "dirty tricks" that could not be laid directly to Washington's door. With the passage of the National Security Act of 1947, the Central Intelligence Agency came into being and was placed under the National Security Council. In its earliest years, the Agency made little headway. But with President Truman's appointment of a select committee to study the entire intelligence community and its structure, the cloak-and-dagger business came into its own. Without detracting from contributions of the other members of the committee, it can be said that the report produced was Allen Dulles', and he devoted the rest of his life to making the most of it. He was first appointed Deputy Director of CIA, then Director by Mr. Eisenhower. His concurrent and larger responsibility was Director, Central Intelligence, in charge of the whole US intelligence effort, not just CIA. Not until John and Robert Kennedy, were two brothers, Allen and John Foster Dulles, to hold so much power at the same time.

Those who framed the national intelligence directives arising from the National Security Act had, with great care, explicitly stated that the Director, Central Intelligence was responsible for and was authorized to acquire "clandestine" or secret intelligence, but not to perform secret operations. At that time, the late forties, the government did not contemplate the staging of such operations, except in rare instances for which there would be specific approval. It was this limitation that Allen Dulles attacked vehemently, and although there was opposition to his views at the White House and in both the State and Defense Departments, he prevailed. The Director, Central Intelligence was subsequently authorized to put his plans for secret operations to a special group of the National Security Council, and with their approval to execute them.

With responsibility for both the covert collection of information and secret operations, Director Dulles had what he wanted, very wide discretionary power not only to ferret out other people's "secrets," but to set in motion and to supervise all varieties of clandestine interventions into the affairs of other nations, to make and break governments. (The Bay of Pigs was the most painful illustration of how that power could be misused, how plans could be made on the basis of "inside" information and carried out in a wave of public outrage, with no sense of denying official US

Yet even at the moment of Dulles' victory, President Eisenhower and others added certain safeguards designed to deter a runaway CIA. The Agency was not to be granted funds sufficient to support such operations as the *Pueblo* or the Bay of Pigs, nor the manpower to carry them out. CIA was not to have for itself, on its own, the manpower, material and funds for "Secret Operations" which duplicated resources in other agencies. The authors of these restrictions felt they had set up adequate protection against Parkinsonian proliferation. They badly underestimated Allen Dulles and his disciples. By the end of the Eisenhower regime, the CIA was drawing manpower from nearly all government sources; it was getting material in abundance, primarily from Defense; it had its hand in the pocket of most other departmental budgets. Pure intelligence (the gathering of information) was but a tip of the iceberg. As much as 90 percent of the Agency's strength outside the US was in "Secret Operations," with the Department of Defense as chief supplier.

The role of the Director, Central Intelligence, it should be noted, is distinct from the CIA. The DCI has overall responsibility for intelligence, whether CIA, the military, the State Department or others. In a very special sense then, it follows that the Director, Central Intelligence may retain this authority when he has been authorized to mount a secret operation, such as the *Pueblo*. This fine distinction is raised by the statement of the present DCI and CIA chief, Richard Helms. "Neither this Agency [CIA] nor I personally," he said, "have had anything to do with the mission of the USS *Pueblo*, the ship itself or any of its crew." Mr. Helms carefully skirted the issue of whether the Director, Central Intelligence "had anything to do" with the mission. If he did not, why not, and who did? Either the Navy was operating on its own authority a clandestine mission in peacetime (contrary to national policy), or it was not. If it was not, and if the CIA was not, then Mr. Helms would have us look elsewhere. Could this mission have been under the operational control of the National Security Agency? But a decision to have placed such an operation under the super-secret NSA would most certainly have involved the White House, State and Defense and the DCI.

One begins to understand why the Navy Admirals are having an embarrassing time over the *Pueblo*. The courage and judgment of Commander Bucher, the efficiency of Navy procedures are irrelevant. The *Pueblo* very probably was not sailing under the operational control of the Navy at the time of its capture. Once on the high seas, it came under the jurisdiction of another agency. At that point, the code of James Bond, not gallant old Navy, took over. That is the significance of Commander Bucher's comment, that "these people were not working for me." "These people"

were the Intelligence Officer and 38 enlisted men on the *Pueblo*, isolated in an area that was closed from the rest of the ship by a triple-locked door, which Bucher was not free to enter at will. That the Navy did not have effective control of the mission is also indicated by its own statement that it had wanted to send a destroyer under heavy air cover and backed by a US ultimatum to North Korea to take the *Pueblo* out of the North Korean harbor after its capture, but that this plan was abandoned (fortunately) after "higher authority" intervened.

There will be many who buy the decoy stories and the trumped-up issues of "Navy regulations," "Go Down with the Ship," "More and Bigger Guns," "Destruction and Scuttling Devices," "Sea-worthiness," and all the rest. Allen Dulles would have been amused. Three days before the *Pueblo* incident, our government was notified by the North Koreans that they regarded the dispatching of "spy boats" as a "provocative act." The warning was ignored. Indeed last week the *Pueblo's* Chief Warrant Officer told a Naval hearing board that no one expected the North Koreans might move against a spy ship off its shores. The Intelligence Officer on board first became aware of trouble when he "heard the clatter of machinegun fire against the port side of the ship."

The key questions are: why was the *Pueblo* where it was when it was; under whose command control was it operating; and whose authorization is required to carry out such sensitive missions, which by their nature invite trouble and which, when they fail, may trigger consequences far more ominous than the capture of a ship and a crew. Such are the questions that should and probably won't be asked by the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Rep. Mendel Rivers, in his "investigation." If, however, Senator Fulbright and his Foreign Relations Committee were to interest themselves in the matter, and dig to the bottom of the mysteries of command and control procedures in intelligence, there is some chance a badly befuddled public would end up knowing more than it does about this whole murky affair.

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INSIDE WASHINGTON

CIA Committee Eyes Pueblo

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WASHINGTON — The first of many congressional inquiries to touch on the Pueblo mission will begin very soon, without fanfare and behind closed doors.

Hearings will be conducted by the Senate subcommittee which oversees the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Periodically, the subcommittee takes a look at world trouble spots. This time it will also focus on policies and decision making with respect to spy missions such as the Pueblo's.

There is no risk that these early hearings will interfere with the Navy's continuing inquiry. The CIA subcommittee does all its business in private. It issues no reports and publishes no hearing transcript — not even a censored "sanitized" version.

Richard Helms, director of CIA, has been scheduled as the subcommittee's first witness. Last week Helms repeated that neither he nor the CIA had anything to do with the Pueblo mission or any of the spy ship's crew.

By law Helms, in addition to running the CIA from its nearby Langley, Va., headquarter, is also "Director of Central Intelligence" — that is, he is the coordinator for all the government's intelligence operations.

Subcommittee members want to know how spy ship missions are conceived and authorized and how, once authorized, they are supervised and directed. In a letter to Sen. Stuart Symington, D-Mo., last week, Helms stated that: "The information that the Pueblo was tasked to gather during this mission was of tactical and departmental interest to the United States Navy."

If coordinator Helms played no role at all, subcommittee members would like to know how the Navy got clearance for electronic spying off the North Korean coast.

Actually, the CIA subcommittee is two merged subcommittees, from the Senate Armed Services and Appropriations committees. It is headed by Sen. Richard B. Russell, D-Ga., who is shifting from the chairmanship of the Armed Services Committee to head the Appropriations Committee.

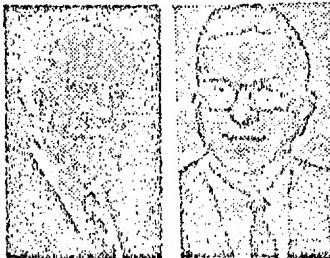
Last year, after a long jurisdictional controversy, Russell invited representatives of the Foreign Relations Committee to sit with the CIA subcommittee in its hearings. All indications are that foreign policy experts will be invited to participate again.

That is important because, as reported here previously, some members of the Foreign Relations Committee are interested in the high-echelon command and control of the Pueblo. Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., the committee chairman, has formally

Committee. There, as a close friend of Stennis, his views will carry great weight.

For years the head of an informal caucus of Southern senators, Russell has sometimes been stereotyped as an unalterable conservative and a hard-liner on such difficult problems as the war in Vietnam. That oversimplified picture blurs Russell's role and downgrades his influence among his colleagues.

It is not forgotten in Congress, for example, that Russell opposed the initial commitment of U.S. troops to Vietnam. His colleagues listen when Russell (as he did recently) says he favors talks with the Communist Chinese, though he still opposes seating Peking government in the United Nations.



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suggested that his group join the Armed Services Committee in joint Pueblo hearings.

While that suggestion is pending, Fulbright and two of his colleagues Sens. Mike Mansfield, D-Mont., and George Aiken, R-Vt., will apparently have a chance to ask Helms about the policy making in connection with such spy missions.

The OLA subcommittee's hearings are to begin soon after Congress returns from its Lincoln Day recess and an organization meeting can be held by the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Russell, senior senator in point of service, is retaining the chairmanship of the subcommittee at the request of Sen. John C. Stennis, D-Miss., who succeeded Russell as head of the Armed Services Committee. No one is surprised.

When the Appropriations Committee holds its organizing session, Russell is also expected to retain the chairmanship of the subcommittee which provides the funds for the Defense Department. In that respect his powers will be similar to those of Appropriations Chairman George Mahon, D-Tex., in the House.

In addition, however, Russell will continue as a top-ranking member of the Armed Services